

**Murmur**  
David James Grinly



*“my memory obviously the panting stops and questions of my memory obviously that too all-important too most important this voice is truly changeable of which so little left in me bits and scraps barely audible when the panting stops so little so faint not the millionth part I say it as I hear it murmur it to the mud every word always”*

How It Is

Samuel Beckett



Murmur is a series of paintings on photographs of walls.

I started taking photographs of walls in the Pré-Saint-Gervais, a suburb to the north of Paris in winter 2016.

When I started asking questions about walls I was not able to hear the difference in tone between the French words “l’Amour” and “le mur”. Love and Wall. I was also reminded of my maudlin schoolboy pleasure at the closeness (in my mind at least) of the words “Amour” and “Mort”. To my hard British ear the soft French sounds seemed almost indecipherably similar.

Mour. Moor. Mor. It isn’t that hard, it turns out, but you do have to pay attention to language in a different way than I have known how to do before. Noises and meanings are similar and different.

I printed the photographs of the walls twice. On the first set of photographs I “kissed” the paint between the photo and a sheet of blank paper. On the second set I used a knife to mix paint directly on the surface of the photographs.

Rather than try to explain in any great detail why I have made these painted photographs I offer below a collage of reminders, thoughts and short passages from texts that I had written in notebooks and on scraps of paper in the weeks around making the photographs and paintings. These may help or hinder, they do not aim to be confusing, rather, I say them as I heard them.

The weight of the paint/love must destroy the photograph?

“Neutral Grey 5” with white added isn’t Neutral?

White paint as inexorable - deathly, negating sun(light)

It is an activity of thought, to know when something is finished.  
(Consummatum)

An automatic mechanical knowledge of the camera should be aligned with an habitual, muscle-memory reflex towards goodness.

Physics is no more than metaphysics.

Aesthetics is only conscionable in the pursuit of ethics.

Ethical choices bear no relation to feeling and are not a matter of innate knowledge.

And neither is love. Love is practiced, learned, developed, enriched.

To “understand” is to understand the origins of good in the same way you might understand the origins of light. It is to understand how light reflects from an object in the same way you might understand how goodness reflects from a subject. It is to understand that truth may not be good, ethics can be monstrous. Ethics can appear absolute and definitive. Just as the sun never shines in the same way on the same surface neither does the reflection of goodness produce the same effect when it is uttered, sung or murmured.

I must try to describe the goodness hidden in the things that I see - adding love by their being spoken.

In that beauty is what appears under your most attentive gaze, with the profoundness of your ethical learning added to it?

Trying to enunciate in song what is good.

Photography is anathema to a mystic.

Love (art) is the ability to produce of anathema (the profane) the good (sacred).

Choose a goodness, know its history and its past – ignore its dogma and attempt to account for its failures.

The failure of the “sacred” in pursuit of the sacred.

What is the process called where I press the images together? Kissing?

Destruction. Abstraction. Obstruction. Obfuscation. Addition. Beautification.

How do values become tangible in my mouth when they are experienced through my eyes?

Is the urge to language the content, the resistance?

They all have their names for the unnamable.

An idiot teaching himself (a fool) how to read in the dark.

If you aren't Simone Weil you shouldn't be allowed to qualify as an RE teacher.

The only subject I ever received a distinction level mark for was classics, aged eleven. The department was closed down the following year.

$a \neq b$

Yet  $x+a \neq 0$  and  $x+b \neq 0$  therefore  $x$  must be equal to something where  $a$  and  $b$  are equal to nothing.

“equations”/ (“proof”)

*(“She was very agitated, half-knocked out but conscious,” said the doctor. Diana repeatedly murmured “Oh my God” as doctors and paramedics began to treat her injuries, firefighters sought to free her from the car and police pushed back the photographers who had been “taking pictures just a few centimeters from her face,” the paper quoted the doctor as saying. “Leave me alone, leave me alone,” Diana said, just before the oxygen mask was placed over her face and she lost consciousness.”)*

<https://web.archive.org/web/20090430123013/http://www.time.com/time/daily/special/diana/timeline/augsept97/10.html>

The completed paintings prove the equation that (a) or (b) which are only photographs of the walls, also now contain x – the love (of what is) missing in them. In order for a photograph to work it must describe in itself its own symbolic language.

Photographic language is one of longing – a reminder of the absence of what is depicted, without recourse.

The photo is what is not present, what is missing. A lack. An absence. An abscess, a pustule of the disease of longing. The paint is bodily substance, it oozes from the sore/source. The paint is love being added to lack. The paint is the lover who has nothing to give offering to someone who does not want it, the very elucidation of their beloved's lack.

Agalmata  $\neq$  Agape?

Graffiti.

(Marking a wall with a political message?)

If the message is your assumed name then your politics are nihilistic (in the negative sense)?

Metropolitan graffiti as a continuation of narcissistic hippieism?

x is painting on the walls of caves.

Lecture on the inside of the cave becoming outside? Krakauer.  
When/Where did I talk about this? Why didn't I write it down?

The violence of property ownership lies in the fact that you cannot paint animals on the walls of your cave. If you do not like the IKEA framed merde you can take it down but then you will have to look at the nail that it hung on.

“Do not use blue tac to hang your postcards”.

(Postcards are the only ongoing access to art that I had in Alva. Postcards retain the meaning of the work of art but dispose with the relation to sacred object. WB. Misreadings of WB – that art work should try to regain aura, or that ritual practices must be restaged, or that experience should be pretended...)

The prohibition stopping you from choosing the colour of your walls at will is a violence tantamount to being instructed that you will wear brylcreem in your hair every day. It is much subtler because you suffer your humiliation alone. In Mushroom, or Magnolia – more likely.

Magnolia as the ultimate violence done to our aesthetic, cultural (well)being.

IKEA framed photographs as terrorism on a level with advertising.

The adornment of the walls of one's cave is more important than choosing one's diet.

The walls of "your" "home" remind you at each moment that this is not your cave, nor your world, not is it a place for you to think, or find pleasure or beauty, it is not a place to imagine. It is especially not a place to imagine, to think visually. It is the greatest of cultural sadnesses to be committing a crime against your financial status, risking losing your deposit by staining the walls with the grease in cheap blu tac.

The French would insist that this be allowed by a law allowing all citizens to paint the walls of their rented homes as they wished. Failing to realise that the walls of a rented home even painted are only painted against the vacuum (French Churches are always open).

00 X ?

Build a wall.  
Shelter behind it.  
Draw on it.  
Hang a mirror.  
60 inch Plasma.

Aristotle's walls.  
Plato's Walls.

Adorno's trashed Cave.  
Baudrillard's space Cave.

The Sacred is found written on the walls of caves.

Would the scrawlings on the cave walls of Freddy's Madman explain his vomit in the marketplace?

Lascaux! Batailles scientifically incorrect and sacred truth of the Genesis of Human being.

I LONG TO BE IN PRISON. (muraille)

A cell where you would be free to scratch off the days remaining  
Or the days past. Depending on the crime.

Jeremy and Michel's Panopticon would allow one at least to be  
despised by wet human eyes. It would allow me to pity my jailers.

Genet's vaseline – Our Lady of the Flowers?

Notre Dames de Murs.

It would be preferable to be killed by the falling of a sandstone block  
from the roof of a church than from the rotten glass of an office,  
wouldn't it?

The walls of a hospital are perhaps the world's most repugnant walls.  
The walls which sing the lies of science the loudest. An out-of-tune,  
auto-tune pop song to longevity.

The walls in the Pre St Gervais.

The walls here are all repainted “badly”.

Where for the British lawnkeeper we might assume a total covering over, a job which makes the marks, repairs, graffiti disappear as though they had never happened. Here, in France the magnolia paint is matched with white, or cream, or grey to cover over just the parts which offend, the original is left alone everywhere else on the wall.

Where a stain is to be removed, or covered over, another stain is produced. A white stain on a cream wall. There is an amusement in it. It is not laziness. It is a discussion between the owners of the wall and the commenter on the wall. It is a call, and then a response. In France the graffiti “artist” says “ME!” and the wall owner says “Everyone else”. In Britain the graffiti “artist” says “ME!” and the wall itself responds by becoming as it was before, precisely. Nothing ever existed. In France the second stain, the stain covering the graffiti says “That wasn’t very interesting was it? It was basic and American and like a Callanetics VHS tape, a sort of suicidally vain wet fart on my wall, think again. You may return when you have something worth reading.”

In Britain there is an aggressive denial of the other. There is a concrete non-void emptied of dialogue. In France there is at least the alienation of judgement.

Fail better.

Covering

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Sovereign

2nd of December 2016

*“Pyramus the loveliest youth and Thisbe the most sought after girl in all the East, lived in neighbouring houses, in the towering city of Babylon that Queen Semiramis enclosed with walls of brick. Their nearness made them acquainted as children and, in time, love appeared. They would have been united in marriage had their parents not prevented it. They were both on fire, they belonged to each other, no forbidding could arrest their love. They were alone and silent, gestures and signs were their speech, and the closer they guarded their fire, the hotter it burned. There was a hole, a thin split, in the wall between their houses, it had been there since the houses were built. No one had noticed the flaw in all those years – but love detected it, as it senses such things. Our lovers found this gap and made of it a path for their voices. Their endearments passed in this way, in safety, in a gentle murmur. Often, when they were in place, Thisbe here, and Pyramus there, and they had caught the sound of the other’s breath, they would said “Monstrous wall, why do you make lovers lonely? Can’t you let our bodies touch, or perhaps even open only enough to let our kisses pass? We are not ungrateful; We know that we owe it to you that our words are allowed to pass to beloved ears.” So they talked, uselessly, facing each other but obscured, saying, as night fell, “Farewell”, each kissing the wall, with lips that could not reach the other side.”*

Ovid

Metamorphosis

*“It is an act of cowardice to seek from (or to wish to give) the people we love any other consolation than that which works of art give us. These help us by the mere fact that they exist. To love and to be loved only serves mutually to render this existence more concrete, more constantly present to the mind. But it should be present as the source of our thoughts, not as their object. If there are grounds for wishing to be understood, it is not for ourselves but for the other, in order that we may exist for him.”*

Gravity and Grace

Simone Weil

*“Je ne vois là que des couleurs confusément amassées et contenues par une multitude de lignes bizarres qui forment une muraille de peinture.”*

Honoré de Balzac

The Unknown Masterpiece.

Mumur  
David James Grinly  
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